DROPSOLID
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

GUIDE 01

SOVEREIGN AI · PROCUREMENT

Vendor evaluation checklist for sovereign AI

40 questions to ask before you sign. Use them verbatim in your RFP, and compare vendors on substance rather than polish.

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EVALUATION CHECKLIST

VENDOR

Sovereignty & governance

SCORE EVERY ANSWER **2** — specific, evidence supplied **1** — vague or partial **0** — refused **Threshold 60 / 80**

1 Sovereignty

10 questions / 20 points

1. Where is language-model inference hosted? Which region?	0	1	2
2. Where is the embedding model hosted?	0	1	2
3. Where is the vector database hosted?	0	1	2
4. Can we self-host each of these components? At what cost?	0	1	2
5. Which subprocessors do you use? In which jurisdictions?	0	1	2
6. Where are backups stored?	0	1	2
7. Where are audit logs stored?	0	1	2
8. What is your DPA position on transfer to third countries?	0	1	2
9. Do prompts or responses leave the EU under any circumstance?	0	1	2
10. Under what conditions would model inference happen outside the EU?	0	1	2

Section score ___ / 20

2 Governance

8 questions / 16 points

11. Do you use our data to train models? Provide contractual language.	0	1	2
12. What audit trace do you produce per interaction? Show a sample.	0	1	2
13. Can we export the audit trace on demand? In what format?	0	1	2
14. What certifications do you hold? Show current audit reports (ISO 27001, SOC 2, or equivalents).	0	1	2
15. Are you EU AI Act ready? Show which obligations you support.	0	1	2
16. What happens when confidence is below threshold? Show us the fallback.	0	1	2
17. How do you handle prompt injection?	0	1	2
18. How do you handle model updates? Do you notify us?	0	1	2

Section score ___ / 16

NOTES

e.g. hosting or subprocessor concerns, missing evidence, follow-ups for your DPO or legal team...

HOW TO USE THIS IN AN RFP

Include the full checklist as an appendix and require every question answered. A score under 60 means a vendor is not ready for regulated deployment.

EVALUATION CHECKLIST

Technical fit & commercial

VENDOR

3 Technical fit

8 questions / 16 points

19. Which LLMs do you support? Can we choose or swap?	0 1 2
20. Can we run our own LLM through your gateway?	0 1 2
21. What is your default response latency? P95?	0 1 2
22. How many languages do you support with source-grounded output?	0 1 2
23. Do you cite sources on every answer? Or is it configurable?	0 1 2
24. How is content indexed? What sources are supported natively?	0 1 2
25. How is content updated? Batch or real-time?	0 1 2
26. How does your system integrate with existing Drupal, Mautic, CMS?	0 1 2

Section score ___ / 16

4 Commercial

6 questions / 12 points

27. Is pricing usage-based or fixed?	0 1 2
28. Under a large attack or usage spike, could our cost balloon?	0 1 2
29. Show us a customer running your system at similar scale.	0 1 2
30. What is your exit process? What data goes with us?	0 1 2
31. What is your typical time-to-production for a new customer?	0 1 2
32. What support is included at each tier?	0 1 2

Section score ___ / 12

NOTES

e.g. demo observations, pricing caveats, integration questions, references to request...

EVIDENCE RULE

When a vendor answers with a confident yes, ask for the evidence behind it: a document, contract clause, architecture diagram, audit report, or live product screen.

EVALUATION CHECKLIST

VENDOR

Team, references & RFP scoring

5 Team and support

4 questions / 8 points

33. Who runs incident response? Where are they based? 0 1 2

34. What is your 24/7 coverage model? 0 1 2

35. Can we escalate to your engineers, or only to support? 0 1 2

36. How do you handle customer feedback that a specific response was wrong? 0 1 2

Section score ___ / 8

6 Reference check

4 questions / 8 points — ask a live customer

37. How long did production deployment take? 0 1 2

38. How does audit trace look in practice? 0 1 2

39. What's one thing you wish you'd known before signing? 0 1 2

40. Would you sign with this vendor again? 0 1 2

Section score ___ / 8

NOTES

e.g. team assessment, references gathered, final recommendation...

<60	60+	70+
Disqualify	**Hold**	**Proceed**
not ready for regulated deployment	close the gaps before signing	strong sovereign posture

FINAL SCORE ____ / 80

Continue the conversation

See how Dropsolid AI answers all these questions in practice.

Whitepaper 01 — A CIO's procurement guide for the EU AI Act →

DROPSOLID ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Whitepaper 01 covers what to procure and why: the sovereignty, governance and audit requirements behind these 40 questions.